United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service
655 Parfet Street, Room E200C
Lakewood, Colorado 80215

SUBJECT: State Technical Committee Meeting **DATE:** April 22, 2005

TO: State Technical Committee Members

Attached is a copy of the meeting minutes for the State Technical Committee Meeting held March 15, 2005, at the Veteran's Building in Lakewood, Colorado. The minutes are also posted on the Colorado website at www.co.nrcs.usda.gov .

If you have any questions regarding these minutes, you may contact Dennis Alexander, Assistant State Conservationist-Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at 720-544-2805 or email at dennis.alexander@co.usda.gov .

/s/

ALLEN GREEN
State Conservationist

Attachment

cc: Dennis Alexander, ASTC-P, NRCS, Lakewood, CO
Jeffery Burwell, SRC, NRCS, Lakewood, CO

State Technical Committee Meeting
Veterans Affairs Building
March 15, 2005

Dennis Alexander, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) called the meeting to order and asked the attendees to introduce who they are and who they are representing. Attendance list attached.

Dennis reported that NRCS has two new programs, the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program and the Conservation Security Program CSP) that we will be discussing today. We have $15 million for conservation innovative programs that was rolled out nationally last year. We will co-pilot the new statewide program this year. The National request for proposals closed March 28. To date three proposals have been submitted for consideration through the national RFP. For the statewide RFP, $500,000 has been set aside to apply to conservation grants. We are asking the State Technical Committee to help us with the review.

Dennis next called on Paul Sweeney, Western Governors Association, NRCS Liaison, to give a presentation on the (GIC) program. CIG is a discretionary provision of the 2002 Farm Bill under EQIP, a competitive grants program, with an opportunity to accelerate the development, transfer rand adoption of innovative technologies and approaches for agriculture. It is a tool to provide more options for environmental enhancement.

CIG Statute is part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Section 1240H. The Secretary has authorized to provide grants to non-Federal governmental and non-governmental organizations and persons on a competitive basis. The funding will be through EQIP (CCC funds).

CIGs Steering Team met in the winter of 2005 with the program manager Dennis Alexander. The team makes recommendations on program development and project proposals to the State Conservationist.

The purpose is to stimulate development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. To leverage Federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection, in conjunction with agricultural production, and to accelerate the transfer of promising technologies and approaches into NRCS technical guides and manuals.

The CIG has two tiers: the National Component - $15 million is allocated for Fiscal Year 2005; and the State Component – the pilot implementation will be in 12 states and one area in FY-2005.

CIG funding availability is announced through a request for proposal (RFP). Applications are submitted to the NRCS State Office. A review panel is convened to score and rank proposals against evaluation criteria in RFP. The NRCS state conservationist makes final award decisions.

CIG is not a research program and will fund projects targeting on-the-ground conservation. Pilot projects and field demonstrations. EQIP eligible practices are generally ineligible for CIG. NRCS in Colorado is looking for fill gaps in programs where additional conservation efforts are needed.

Some project examples include market-based environmental credit trading projects to address a natural resource concern, community-based approaches to regional natural resource concerns, demonstration of a proven technology in a new geographic area or agricultural sector, and use of an existing technology or approach in a new way to help solve a natural resource concern.

Applicant eligibility will include state or local units of government, federally-recognized Indian Tribes, non-governmental organizations and individuals. A cash landlord is not eligible.

The natural resource concerns for FY-2005 are water resources, soil resources, atmospheric resources, grazing land and forest health, and wildlife habitat.

The Colorado CIG program will fund up to $500,000 in approved projects. It will fund up to 50 percent of the cost of selected projects. No one project will receive more than $75,000. It is anticipated there will be funding for five to seven projects. There are special provisions for Limited Resource and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers and Tribes. Applications from any of these groups may derive 75 percent of their matching funds from in-kind services.

The proposed evaluation process will include the review panel who scores and ranks proposals against evaluation criteria in the RFP. An NRCS program manager will certify the rankings and ensure consistency with programs objectives. The state conservationist will make final award decisions based on recommendations of the program manager.

Awards details will be posed on the Colorado NRCS CIG webpage: www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/rpograms/cig .

Request for proposals will be posted on the website: www.Grants.gov and the Colorado NRCS website sometime close to April 1, 2005. Proposals will be due in the State Office by 4:30pm MST on May 31, 2005.

The natural resources concerns and objectives is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance water quality and /or quantity in watersheds with predominantly agricultural land uses while sustaining productivity in Colorado for FY 2005 is:

Water Resources, alternative utilization and/or management of animal waste; reduction of consumptive use on irrigated crops; intermittent and declining water supplies; augmentation of stream flows; improving water quality through streambank erosion control; salinity or selenium reduction

Soil Resources, erosion control on low residue specialty crops (potatoes, vegetables, etc.); accumulation of harmful levels of constituents in soils, especially salts and selenium; more cost-effective methods of streambank erosion control.

Atmospheric Resources, bio-based energy opportunities; biomass utilization; erosion control on low residue specialty crops (potatoes, vegetables, etc.)

Grazingland and Forest Health, invasive species prevention and management on grazing and forestlands with emphasis on biological controls; grazing practices that promote sustainability; fuel reduction and utilization on forestlands

Wildlife Habitat, incentive systems that promote the conservation of species at-risk; improving wildlife habitat in stream corridors; protection of wildlife habitat from invasive species; grazing systems that promote biodiversity; providing more consistent stream flows for aquatic species; reduction of selenium as an impact to aquatic species

Paul stated that NRCS is looking for pilot or field demonstrations, and that projects eligible for EQIP programcontracts will not be eligible under this program.

Comments

Question: How was the $500,000 funding level decided?
Response: We have the staff to support five to seven projects. The cost-share may be 50 percent of which 50 percent can be in-kind. Fifty percent of the project costs will be paid by the Federal funds; the other share has to be in-kind, cash or other services.

Question: Steve Miller asked if AG Sustainability is ineligible.
Response: The proposals need to tie into the five natural resources.

Question: Is this a one-year program?

Response: This can be up to a three-year program.

Question: Define in-kind services.
Response: In-kind services include staff, materials, something you already have in substitute of cash. It may be hours of service or man hours donated by another entity or person.

Question: Will this program be available in 2006? And what is the start date and availability?
Response: Colorado is a pilot for the CIG program in2005 and in 2006 we anticipate having that announced when we have an approved budget. We anticipate the state component will be sent to the national office next year, about this same time.

During the months of April and May we will look at the request for proposals. This information is due back by May 13.

Paul indicated that we need volunteers for the ranking panel. Let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in serving on this panel.
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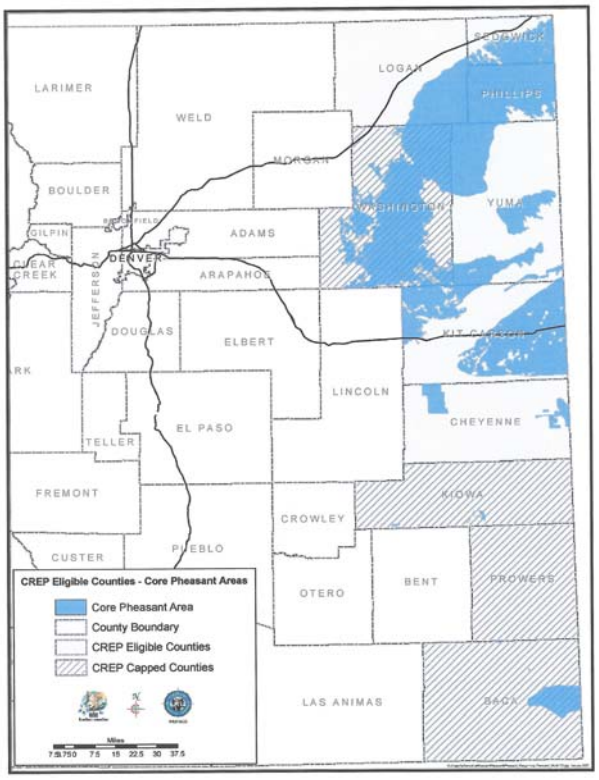
Dennis next call on Tim Davis, Colorado Department of Wildlife to give a report on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). He explained that the CREP is a voluntary stat/federal partnership, is geographically focused, is an environmental concern and has local support.

The acreage and funding limitations include no more than 100,000 acres per state per proposal, limits federal funding to $200 million, requires 20% non-federal match, and a portion of the match can be in-king services.



National CREP objectives included coordinating federal and non-federal resources to address specific conservation objectives and to improve water quality and quantity, erosion control, and wildlife habitat related to agriculture in a specific geographic area.

The development process includes that State, NRCS, and FSA developing a proposal (in consultation with partners), and submit it to the Deputy Administrator Farm Programs (DAFP), FSA, in Washington, DC. It is then reviewed by inter-agency group in Washington, DC and comment are provided. The State FSA completes the environmental assessment is applicable and the proposal is finalized. An agreement is then drafted for approval. The agreement is signed by the Governor and the Secretary of Agriculture.

Additional CREP proposal requirements include a firm 20% non-Federal match, there is local support, the CRP-2 Handbook changes are included, the consent building effort, monitoring and annual reporting.

Colorado CREP Status for the Colorado High Plains. It is proposed by the CDOW and the match is provided by the CDOW.
Core Pheasant Range and High Plains CREP boundary in eastern Colorado.

The concept for this proposal is to provide secure nesting cover, brood cover, and survival cover for pheasants and other ground nesting birds, provide agronomic benefits in a wheat-fallow system, and provide a “super CREP” for whole farm farming.

The “Super CREP Concept” includes the following:

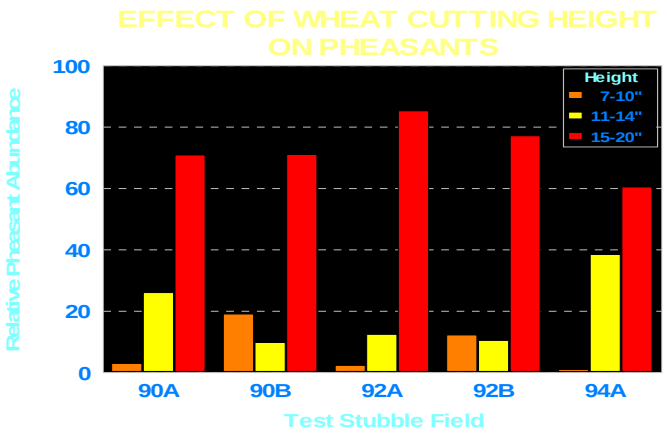
- FSA – CREP to retire small blocks (40 acres) for nesting cover
-
- NRCS-EQIP to apply conservation tillage (tall Stubble)
- CDOW – pheasant habitat improvement program (PHIP) to promote annual broadleaf forbs in wheat stubble
- CDOW – walk-in access program to provide incentives for hunting recreation

Results: 99 thousand acres of actively managed, top quality pheasant habitat, open to WIA hunting, increased profitability for wheat-fallow farmers; and focus on permanent cover adjacent to tall wheat stubble with annual forbs.

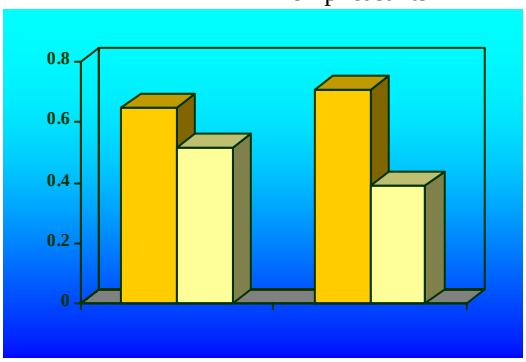
The Core Features include one permanent block of cover, 25% of total (water quality, soil erosion, wildlife habitat; wheat fallow farming on remaining 75% (tall stubble, 15" or more, no fall herbicide treatment with residual soil activity, water quality, soil erosion, wildlife habitat).

Using small blocks of permanent cover secures nesting cover, creates "edge-effect", and reeducated soil erosion. Also pivot corners are in permanent cover and open for WIA hunting. Tall stubble helps with moisture retention and storage (Kansas – delayed minimum tillage), reduces erosion, and supports a better wildlife habitat.

Effect of wheat cutting height on pheasants

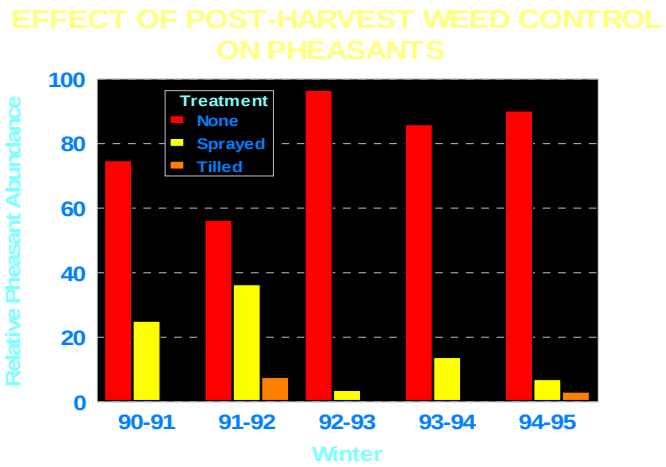


Pheasant survival enhancement in
on pheasants



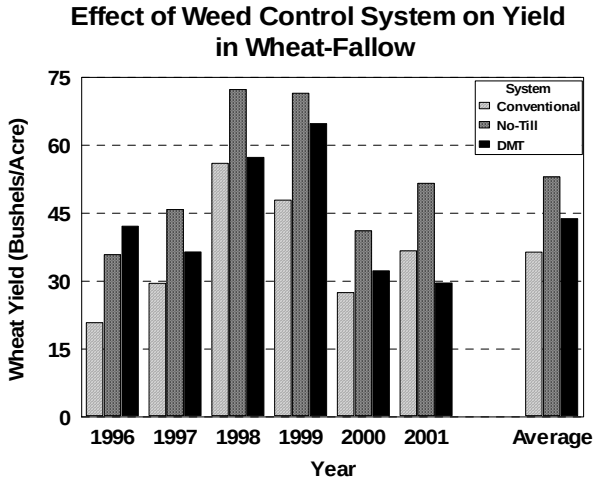
Effect of post-harvest weed control stripped wheat (CO.)

1996 1997

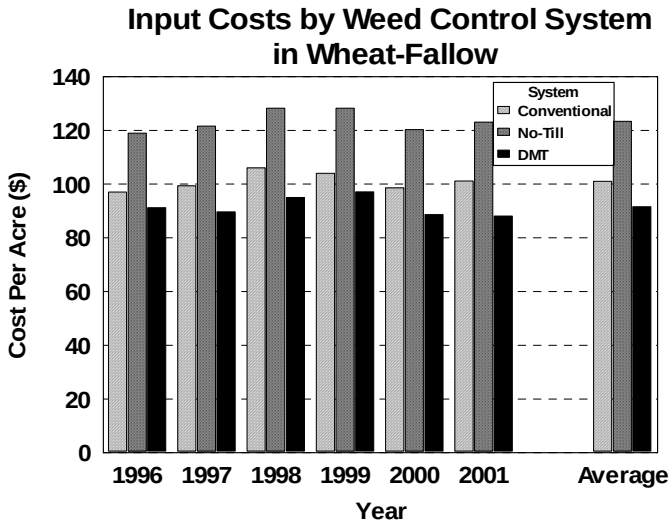


Producer facts – allows producer to enroll part of his field, whole farming the rest, all practices come with an incentive payment, income from conservation and farming, and an increased farm profitability.

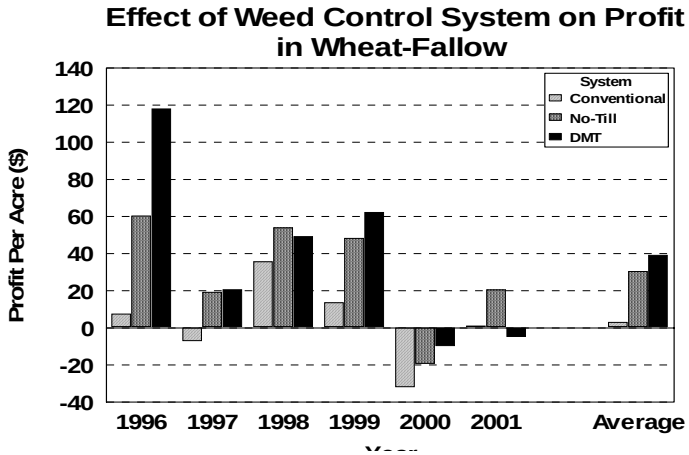
If all you care about is **Yield**, then no-till what-fallow is for you. Results from plot in Tribune, Kansas



But if you factor in the cost of INPUTS, no-till in wheat-fallow is the most expensive

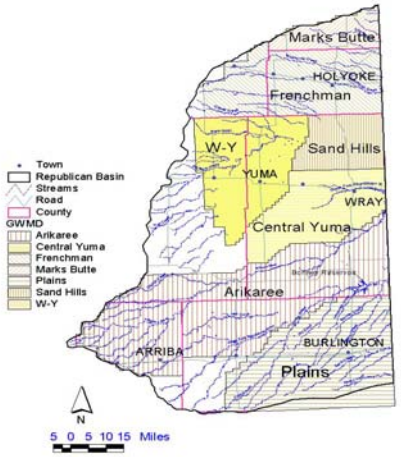


So, it what matters most is increasing your PROFIT, and then let the weeds grow after wheat harvest and spray in the springs. The worst possible practice is any post-harvest tillage; it will cut your yields and your bottom line.



High Plains objectives includes 30,000 acres in the CREP program, 65,000 acres of Delayed Minimum Tillage (DMT) wheat-fallow, and 95,000 acres in walk-in acres. The estimated costs (15-year program) is $26 million CREP (540 acre blocks), $6 million EQIP (residue management), and $7 million CDOW (PHIP and WIA).

Republican River Basin is in the early stages of planning



Sponsors for the Republic River Basin include the Republican River Water Conservation District and Water Activity Enterprise, the Division of Water Resources, Water Enterprise, the Division of Wildlife for technical expertise, the CSU Cooperative Extension Service and other partners.

Resource concerns for the Republican River Basin include a decline in the Ogallala Aquifer, reduced stream flows – native fish declines, reduction in secure nesting cover for ground nesting birds, increased chemicals in water supply and streams, and increased sedimentation.

Dryland crop covers 3,481,537 acres or 86% and irrigated crop covers 561,271 acres or 14% of the land.

Republican River Watershed Proposal Core Features include: retire a total of 30,000 acres of irrigated agriculture in the Republican River basin (this is 5%); eligible producers will receive incentives and payments based on practice, location, and retirement of the land; and to achieve a mix of surface and ground water that meets CREP objectives.

Republican River CREP objectives include: reduce agricultural water use by 35,000 acre feet per year; reduce fertilizers and pesticide use by 5% over entire project area; increase stream flows by 5%; restore and enhance 500 acres of wetlands; establish 25,000 acres of undisturbed native grass; and reduce soil erosion to zero on enrolled acres.

Proposed cost analysis (input from Extension Service and CSU)

SOURCE	**COSTS**	**PERCENT OF TOTAL**
Federal Funds – CRP	$46,770,000	78%
Non-Federal Cash-RRWCD	$11,595,000	19%
Non-Federal in-Kind	$1,570,000	3%
TOTAL	**$59,935,000**	**100%**

Tim informed the group that DOW will be taking comments and would like to have a proposal for submission to the FSA in May. Tim provides the technology and Scott Richroth is writing the proposal. We hope to have this out to you soon . If you need copies or want to participate see Tim or Scott.

Question: What is the difference in this CREP?
Response: Counties in eastern Colorado have CRP and all dryland areas. Rental Rates are for dryland and CRP. CRP is not available for irrigated cropland areas.

Question: What is the legal precedence for retiring water rights, it passes through many hands.
Response: $11.6 million is available for incentives to encourage or require permanent retirement. FSA requires water rights to be held by local entity (those putting up the matching funds).

What is being done to assist counties who are up to the maximum acreage for eligibility?
Response: In 2002, continuous funding and WRP was available.

Question: A Resolution was passed at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Convention this year to set aside 1% of the 25% cap for WRP and CRP. Can FSA have the latitude to do this?
Response: Lewis Frank indicated that there no latitude. This needs to be addressed in the 2007 Farm Bill. As acres expire, there may be an opportunity to enroll.

Question: What is the time line on CREP? When some of the acreas come out of CRP, what is the signup timeline?
Response: there is a lot to be done. Probably in the fall or winter in the High Plains.

Questions: How is the High Plains going to be monitored?
Response: Through wildlife. They will have extensive survey and use data information as a baseline and monitoring population. These counts will be reflected as trends.

Question: What is the main irrigation system used?
Response: Currently use pivots then ground water source.

Question: Have you looked at the amount used, the new impact, economic analysis (only look at 5%; less than1%). If we don't use the water, we conserve it. There is groundwater contamination and runoff.
Response: This is only one project, we cannot solve all the problems.

Comment. Randy Loutzenhiser indicated that he did not like to see land taken out of production. CREP recognized water savings via retirement.
Response: Scott indicated that cut back compliance is being viewed as one piece of the puzzle. There are eight objectives in the CREP proposal. All need to be looked at and addressed. Conservation districts are charged with task of meeting compliance and looking at conservation practices that do not require being taken out of compliance. Objectives are being met by the proposal.

Using meters is a short term economic monitors, we do not see as immediate short term, we see them as long term.

Jerry Sonnenberg indicated they would appreciate receiving your ideas. There are a lot of them out there. We need to hear about ways to keep economic variables, and do this without retirement.

The model favors Colorado over Kansas and Nebraska. We have to live within the model to find paper water or real water at the station. One charge of the Republic River Conservation District. There are three-years in the plan and have to run a five-year usage program. This is behind because of the drought.

Tim thanked Lewis Frank and Lynette DiFeo, FSA, for the scheduling of FSA personnel from Washington, DC to review the proposed schedules and making sure that they are in compliance.

Comment:
Question: What is the selection criteria for the watersheds?
Response: In addition to the national criteria, the following was considered: 1) digital soils information; 2) watersheds with Rusle2 model that is in operation. 3) Geographic distribution. There is a lot of variety of working the landscapes; we are getting experience this first year. For Colorado, we found a map, applied the criteria and the watersheds that cross political boundaries, the state that has the largest portion of the watershed in their state is the lead state in the program.

We will use the rotating watershed approach; this allows manageable portions of land to work with. We can then add or remove land easier when more/or less funds are available. There is a 15% Technical Assistance limit. self-assessment will be used because of the restrictions of the available Technical Assistance.

Question: If Tier III needs to meet the criteria, and this is being done with available programs and the NRCS staff, do you plan to consult with the other entities?
Response: Yes.

Question: Do you plan to seek an approach and include all entities? There are many programs/resources that an be plugged into this program

Response: resource concerns are being addressed by each watershed; we will be seeking their input/concerns in future signups.

Dennis called the meeting back to order after lunch. He cautioned everyone to not get confused, there are two programs - GSWC and EQIP.

EQIP and GSWC utilize the same program rules but have different objective and legislative mandates. The GSWC legislation lists conversion to dryland farming and growing of less water intensive crop as a national priority. EQIP funds have not been used for these priorities.

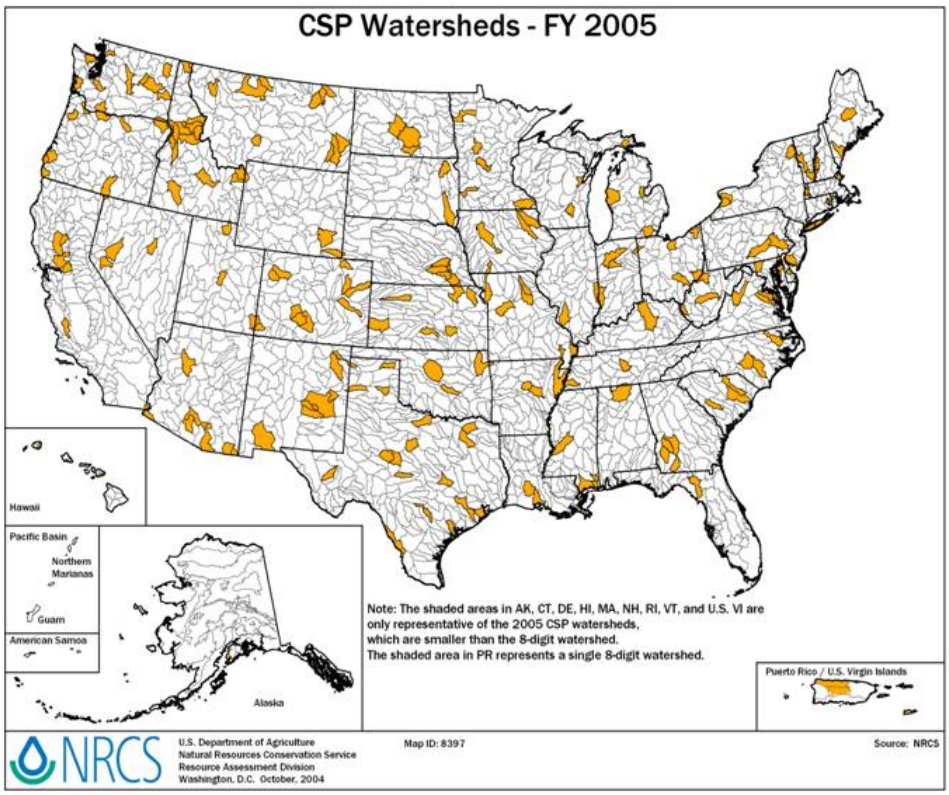
Dennis next called on **Gary Finstad, State Program Coordinator of the Conservation Security Program (CSP).** Gary reported the CSP program gives us the opportunity to reward the working conservationists who are trying to do leading-edge conservation, going beyond the minimum conservation requirements, and really trying to reach for the stars in terms of what you can do with conservation.

The CSP is a voluntary program authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill, it rewards producers who are applying and documenting high levels of conservation and management, and it gives them ability to earn payments by adding and/or expanding conservation activities.

To be eligible for CSP in 2005 you need to ask the following:

- Are you a priority watershed
- Is your land eligible
- Are you, as an applicant, eligible
- Have you achieved treatment requirements for soil and water quality
- Are you willing to do additional resource enhancement.

The application process will have producers review and fill out the self-assessment workbook; submit the completed workbook to NRCS during the sign-up period; meet with NRCS to review documentation of practices; NRCS will determine tier and enrollment category; funding will allow for as many contracts as possible to be funded.

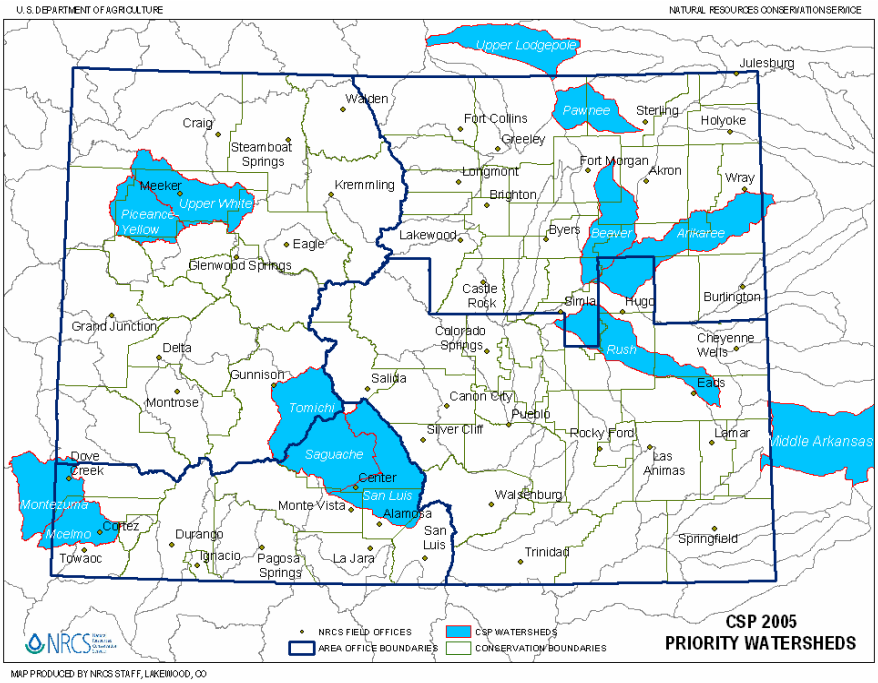

CSP Watersheds - FY 2005
Hawaii
Pacific Basin
Northern Marianas
Guam
American Samoa
Alaska
Note: The shaded areas in AK, CT, DE, HI, MA, NH, RI, VT, and U.S. VI are only representative of the 2005 CSP watersheds, which are smaller than the 8-digit watershed.
The shaded area in PR represents a single 8-digit watershed.
Puerto Rico / U.S. Virgin Islands
NRCS
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Resource Assessment Division
Washington, D.C. October, 2004
Map ID: 8397
Source: NRCS

CSP Priority Watersheds

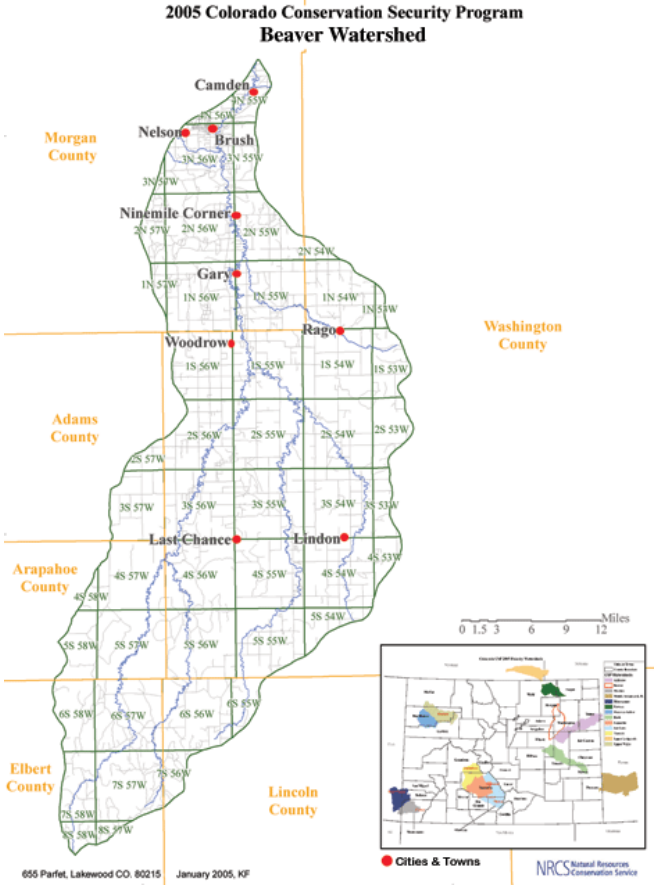
We will use the Beaver Watershed as an example/template. The Beaver Watershed includes the counties of Morgan, Washington, Adams, Arapahoe, Elbert and Lincoln.

Using the watershed approach, this will provide rotating eligibility system that will give all producers an opportunity to participate. The watersheds are nature's boundaries and group producers with similar resource issues.

Colorado CSP Watersheds



Watersheds are easily adapted to funding changes and this keeps costs within the mandated 15% technical assistance funding.



Eligibility requirements for the Land include majority of the agricultural operation within a priority watershed, it is privately owned or Tribal lands (payments only to privately owned or Tribal lands), and it is in compliance with HEL/wetland provisions. Farms can be combined if it meets this definition Agricultural Operation means all agricultural land and other lands determined by the (NRCS) Chief, whether contiguous or noncontiguous, under the control of the applicant and constituting a cohesive management unit that is operated with equipment, labor, accounting system, and management that are substantially separate from any other. Agricultural Land means cropland, rangeland, pastureland, hayland, private non-industrial forest land, if it is an incidental part of the ag operation, and other land on which food, fiber, and other agricultural products are produced.

Eligible Land uses include cropland, orchards, vineyards, pasture, rangeland

Lands that are not eligible include land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), or Grasslands Reserve Programs (GRP), recently converted cropland, forest land (except "incidental" land) and public land.

For the application to be eligibility you must have an active interest in an operation, control the land for life of the contract, share risks and be entitled to share profits/crops/livestock, and meet conservation requirements for a tier.

CSP is a Three-Tiered Program.

Tier I – protect soil and water quality on part of your operation – contract length equals five years

Tier II – protect soil and water quality on all of your operation – the contract length equals five to ten years (and agrees to address one other resource concern)

Tier III – protect all natural resources concerns on all of your operation – contract length equals five to ten years.

Self-Assessment Process – as a potential participant and the one who knows your land best, you will undertake a self-assessment to determine if your operation meets technical standards for CSP. If you meet basic treatment criteria for eligibility, discussions with NRCS will help you decide at which tier you will participate.

Application Process includes CSP self –assessment workbook to determine eligibility, document stewardship to date, and prepare benchmark inventory of existing conservation treatments. Using the self-assessment as a guide, an NRCS conservationist and producer will meet to understand conditions on the land, review conservation treatments and management and explore potential to further enhance conservation treatment.

Sample practices for achieving soil and water quality include conservation tillage, erosion control (e.g., terraces), residue management and/or cover crops, nutrient management, grazing management, pesticide application and management and buffers.

What this means in the Beaver Watershed is they have a conservation tillage system, manage and rotate grazing paddocks, limiting animal access to streams, etc. They do a field-by-field inventorying and use the date in applying nutrients according to land grant university and soil test recommendations and apply pesticides in a prescribed manner

Four payment components include an annual **stewardship payment** for the benchmark (current level) conservation treatment; an annual **existing practice payment** for maintaining existing conservation practices; one-time **new practice component** for additional practices; and **enhancement payments** for exceptional conservation effort.

CSP contract limits are as follows (sum of all annual payments):

Tier I - $20,000; Tier II - $35,000; Tier III - $45,000

Stewardship Payment Limits are as follows:

Tier I - $5,000 (25%); Tier II - $10,500 (30%); Tier III - $13,500 (30%)

Stewardship Payment, a function of: the acreage amount; stewardship payment rate; statutory tier percentage; regulatory reduction factor.

Statutory Tier Percentage

Tier I equals 5%; Tier II equals 10%; Tier III equals 15%

Regulatory Reduction Factor

Tier I equals 0.25; Tier II equals 0.50; Tier III equals 0.75

Payment Limits

Irrigated Cropland: SR@ $100/acre Net Per Acre Payments:

Tier I $1.25; Tier II $5.00; Tier III $11.25

Examples – Irrigation Cropland

Tier I - 100 ac. x $200/ac. x .05 x 0.25=$125

Tier II - 100 ac. x .10 x 0.50-$500

Tier III – 100 ac. x $100/ac. x .15 x 0.75-$11.25

Stewardship Payment Limits

Rangeland: SR @ $5/acre New Per Acre Payments:

Tier I $0.06; Tier II $0.25; Tier III $0.56

Payment Formula Rangeland examples:
Tier I 1,000 ac. x $5/ac. x .05 x 0.25=$62.50
Tier II 1,000 ax x $5/ac. x .10 x 0.50-$250.00
Tier III 1,000 ac. x $5/ac. x .15 x 0.75-$562.50
Existing Practice Payment is 25% of annual stewardship payment
Irrigation Cropland Examples
Tier I $125 x .25=$31.25
Tier II $500 x .25=$125.00
Tier III $1,125 x .25 = $281.25

Beyond Basic Eligibility:

Enhancements include more funding, more conservation benefits for producers who go beyond the prescribed conservation levels.

Enhancements include: soil management, nutrient management, pest management, irrigation management, grazing management, habitat management, air resource management and energy management

Enhancement Examples
Improving soil or water beyond the minimum level required.
Improving local priority resource conservation concerns (e.g. air quality or grazing management).
Enhancing wildlife habitat.
Managing, conserving and/or producing energy on the farm or ranch.

Energy Enhancements include: exciting new are in conservation incentive programs, includes energy management options

Energy Examples

Farm energy audits, recycling of lubricants, using ethanol or biodiesel, generating energy such as wind or methane, conservation tillage and limiting fertilizer use.

Sample Enhancements for the Beaver Watershed
Integrated pest management.
Precision application of nutrients
Grazing management for rangeland health and wildlife benefits
Maintenance of riparian corridor vegetation for water quality and wildlife benefit

Enhancements

Represent conservation treatment that goes beyond the minimum eligibility requirements.

Producers will be paid for what they have already done, as well as whey they agree to do in the future.

What is next?

Final Rule to be published
Sign-up dates to be announced (tentatively April 1-May 31; likely to have a 60-day sign-up period
Public meetings and workshops
Self-assessments
NRCS verification of information
NRCS determination of enrollment eligibility and enrollment category
Sign-up date will be in April.

Gary indicated that when using the CSP workbook you need to have mostly "yes" responses. We have adapted the workbook if a state is working with other states. Public meetings will be held for your input. Interviews will be scheduled to determine if the proposal meets the criteria.

Comments

Questions: Harley Ernst asked how will the land rental rate be determined.
Response: Payment rates considers: 1) CRP rental rates; 2) Ag Foreign Investment Disclosure Act lend value survey; and 3) National Ag Statistics Service land rental data.
Question: CSP or CRP, did Congress give funds for drought assistance?
In the CSP are their any numbers and how has this affected this program?
Response: It will not affect this year's programs.

Question from Randy Loutzenhiser – If there is a contract holder, who receives the payment?
Response: Everyone is eligible to receive a payment as a participant. Only one primary applicant is allowed on any one contract, and they may be a participant on other contracts. (note – the *Federal Register* has changed this to participating in only one contract per tax ID number).

Question: When the producer identifies an ag unit, could this include crop share with other landlords?
Response: Rangeland – the landowner who does not share in the risk would not receive benefit of the CSP payment. This needs to be included in their contract with the leasee.

Question from Harley Ernst: How do you receive CRP expired land into this contract?
Response: If it is CRP land or GRP land and the agreement expires, and it is no longer covered by an annual payment, it is eligible. The CSP contract is modified to old and new ones.

Question from Ted Toombs: What is the reason behind pubic input? Is it because of time crunch, however, the people/partners could be of help and assist in developing this program. In Wyoming, there was a lot of feed back from their State Technical Committee.
Response from Dennis – We are working with National Headquarters, our partners and other agencies. Because the program changes so rapidly, we were not able to deliver anything until just recently. Colorado took a conservative role in developing this program. Once you see the enhancement we are using I do not think you will be disappointed.

Question: Will time be allowed for comments this year
Response: No, not until next year

Travis James asked if enhancements for salinity will be included in the Montezuma program and does the State request this, or are they handed down by headquarters
Response: the enhancements were developed at headquarters, and we assume that Mcelmo and Montezuma will use them, but don't have that information right now.

Comment: We would like to see the salinity enhancement available for the CSP applicants.

Comment: Bill Noonan – There is a need to inform the State Technical Committee of all program deadlines.
Response: Some are ongoing and some will be posted on the website of NRCS. Some of the general programs include:

The GRP cutoff date march 25
Wildlife habitat incentives
Applications due by April 8
EQIP and GSWC, we are ranking applications now
The National Office has accelerated the funding dates and evaluations.
By April 18, tentative funding will need to be approved.
We will have a second funding period for animal waste contracts
The signup will announced shortly

Dennis next called for any comments or announcements:
Shane Briggs indicated that an informal sub-committee to discuss wildlife issues is being formed and invited others to participate.

Greg Sundstrom informed the group that there is a three-state workshop in McCook, Nebraska, March 30-31, 2005

Travis James advised that the Colorado River Basin States funds are available for wildlife, riparian below 7,000 feet. Any project that flows to the Colorado River is eligible.

Question: Harley Ernst asked about the CRP signup, the climatic factor and high erodability of the land.
Comment: you should contact Lewis Frank, FSA regarding these questions.

John McHugh PE, CID, CLIA, representing Rain Bird Agri-Products Corp. and the Four State Irrigation Council made oral comments and submitted the following written comments:
1.) RE: Republican River Water Conservation Districts CREP proposal:
I am very strongly opposed to the use of Farm Bill conservation funds to retire irrigated agricultural lands. This flies in the face of the purpose for which these tax payer funds have been allocated. Also the RRWCD spin that some how non-irrigated lands are more applicable to conservation practices is false. All conservation practices like terracing, conservation tillage, grass waterways, proper chemical application can all be done equally as well on irrigated land. In fact properly used pressurized irrigation enhances the ability to prevent soil erosion, non-point pollution, reduce emissions into the air and promote wildlife habitat. All of these are national priorities.

I am not opposed of producers selling off their water or land. It is their right. I am strongly opposed to the use of tax payer funds intended to support agriculture and natural resource conservation being used to reduce agricultural production and provide no or negative conservation value.

This is the second time the RRWCD has tried to divert Farm Bill conservation funds for there own agenda. It is obvious their true intent is to take water away from agriculture. They are using considerable state and federal taxpayer money in this effort. There should be an investigation into how much state and federal tax payer money is being used to support this effort. This should include the use of vehicles, equipment, salaries of; Division of Water Resource, RRWCD, CSU State Legislators, Private consultants and anyone supporting this effort.

If the Republican River Compact requires buying out farmers and retiring irrigated farmland then I suggest they use exiting water law and put a surge charge on all new exempt wells and uses. If we have over allocated priorities have been adjudicated and a fee can be charged to all with lesser priority, including industrial and residential use of municipal water. They should stop spending taxpayer money trying to raid Farm Bill funds intended to support agriculture.

2.) Leasing Water Rights:
Leasing of Irrigated Lands is at most a short-term solution. I have seen it in Southern California and in Arizona. Water use continues to grow and at the termination of the lease the situation is even worse. Unless in reality it is an abandonment program, and at the end what the leasee losses is water rights to the municipality. The idea that because land is in fallow water is available for use elsewhere is only true if the producers were not already using fallow in their rotation. Trying to create water on paper is a waist of time and money. The Division of Water Resources, State Engineers Office, Legislators and all of us should be investing in expanding and improving storage, conveyance, re-charge, treatment-reuse and on-site infrastructure (for all sites not just agriculture). New water user and if needed those of lesser priority should flip the bill for this. That is Western Water Law. It has worked for years why all the schemes now. It is alarming to see more and more public employees threatening agricultural producers they need to cooperate with programs that are not in their best interest because if they do not they will loose out by “Emanate Domain”. This has never happened. And the agricultural production of food and fiber for this nation has a stronger case for “Emanate domain” than sprawling municipal development with parks, golf courses and wasteful homeowners. The agricultural production of food, fuel and fiber is paramount to the economic strength of this nation, national security and our influence in the world. Agricultural producers are willing to use their resources efficiently and beneficially. And it is there right to do so. Agencies like the NRCS, Dept of Water Resources and CSU need to continue to assist and protect them.

3.) Salinity Programs:
I have heard in Utah and Colorado that the current project will work by applying water to agricultural land in a manor to prevent the leaching of salts and minerals. If this is the case we are in trouble. History, fundamental soil science and agricultural engineering demonstrate without leaching salts will accumulate and lands will eventually become non-productive. No matter how slight the concentration without leaching it will continue to concentrate in the soil and eventually make the land non-productive. And run-off from mountain streams, like our water supply in Colorado, is high in salts and minerals. The idea that new irrigation technologies make crops more salt tolerant is false. What they do is put the irrigation water right at the root. So the plant does not have to use water from the soil matrix where salts concentration is higher. The new salts delivered by the irrigation water are pushed out to the wetted front and continue to accumulate. What will happens is salts will accumulate on these lands until a natural precipitation event pushes them into the root zone killing vegetation and leaching them out into the hydrologic systems we were trying to protect or the land will become non-productive or both. Agricultural engineering teaches

us the proper way to protect a hydrologic system from salts and minerals and use Irrigation and Drainage systems in coordination. Through proper irrigation with controlled leaching salts are removed. The leachate is the collected by the drainage system and then delivered to an evaporative pond. With a cover pond condensation can be collected and water free of salts and minerals can be returned to the hydrologic systems. Salts and minerals can be collected and used in a beneficial way. This can be done with a passive system or accelerated with a dynamic system, using biomass grown on the collection area, solar concentrators and other existing technology. This process can also be used to reclaim land already lost to y accumulated salts and can add high quality water to the system for use elsewhere. If this is something that f interest the NRCS, under a Conservation Innovation Grant or other program I would be glad to put together a team with private sector people from companies like Rain Bird, NDS, 3M and Morton Salt company to prepare a design. An actual demonstration project based on this design could be done at a later date under another program.

It seems to me the Technical Committee is less technical, a more political agenda. I am not sure if anything could be done about this. But if there were, it would increase our effectiveness. The above comments are mine and may or may not be those of my employer or other organizations I am associated with.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.
John McHugh PE, CID, CLIA
Rain Bird Agri-Products Corp., Central US District Manager
Four State Irrigation Council, Commercial Director
Central Plains Irrigation Association, Colorado Representative
American Society of Agricultural Engineers, Vice Chair or Micro irrigation Sub-Committee
Western Colorado Horticultural Society, Member
Irrigation Association, Member

Attendees to the
State Technical Committee Meeting
Veteran's Affairs Building
March 15, 2005

Cindy French, Dairy Farmers of America
Jeff Sonnenberg, Farm Bureau
Debbie Slobe, Playa Lakes Joint Venture
Randal Ristau, CDPHE – Water Quality
Peg Perreault, EPA, Region 8, Pesticide Team
Bill Noonan, USFWS-PFU
Vic Fiscus, VLT Valley Irrigation, Greeley, CO
Nancy Smith, The Nature Conserve
Roy Hall, NRCS
Ted Toombs, Environmental Defense
John McHugh, CPIA, Rain Bird 4-State Irrigation Council
Travis James, NRCS
Tammy VerCarteren, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
Fred Raish, Yuma County Pest Control/Colorado Weed
Tracee Bentley, Colorado Farm Bureau
Lewis Frank, FSA
Jim Phene, Central Plains Irrigation Association
Jeff Burwell, NRCS
Greg Sundstrom, Colorado State Forest Service
Shane Briggs, Colorado Department of Wildlife
Harley Ernst, Cope Conservation District
Tim Davis, Colorado Division of Wildlife
Paul Sweeney, Western Governor's Association
Bob Warner, Upper South Platte River Watershed
Bud Mekelburg, Yuma Conservation District
Tudi Arneill, West Arapahoe Conservation District
Pam King, Colorado State Conservation Board
Steve Miller, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Dennis Alexander, NRCS
Gary Finstad, NRCS
Donna Rasmussen, NRCS
Tony Puga, NRCS
Debbie Kanatzer, NRCS
Linda Neel, NRCS